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Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6800

S E C R E T KUALA LUMPUR 2209

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OVIP, UNG, MY (PRIME MINISTER HUSSEIN)
SUBJECT: POSSIBLE VISIT OF MALAYSIAN PRIME MINISTER

REF: (A) STATE 70611, (B) KUALA LUMPUR 1762

1. DURING CONVERSATION APRIL 8 MFA PRINCIPAL ASSISTANT SECRETARY SATHIAH EXPRESSED GREAT CONCERN LEST A MEETING NOT TAKE PLACE BETWEEN PRIME MINISTER HUSSEIN AND PRESIDENT CARTER WHEN THE FORMER IS IN THE U.S. TO ATTEND THE UNGA THIS COMING SEPTEMBER. ALTHOUGH POINTS MADE REF A WERE EXPLANED TO HIM,SATHIAH PLEADED THAT TIME BE FOUND FOR THE MEETING, "EVEN IF ONLY FOR AN HOUR."

2. SATHIAH'S REACTION, WHICH WE TAKE TO BE THAT OF THE FOREIGN MINISTER AND POSSIBLY DATUK HUSSEIN HIMSELF, SHOULD BE SEEN IN THE CONTEXT OF HUSSEIN'S ATTEMPT TO STEER MALAYSIA ON A MORE MODERATE, PRO-WESTERN COURSE THAN HIS PREDECESSOR AND OF HIS REFUSAL TO MANIPULATE THE RULING PARTY (UMNO) TO HIS OWN ADVANTAGE. HIS SUPPORT CURRENTLY DEPENDS VERY MUCH ON HIS POSITION AS AN HONEST, STRAIGHT FORWARD PATER FAMILIAS WHOSE POLITICAL IMAGE IS MORE THE RESULT OF GOVERNMENTAL DECISIONS AND
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FOREIGN VISITS THAN SPEECHES AND MEDIA MANIPULATION. HUSSEIN HAS VISITED THE ASEAN COUNTRIES, EXCEPT THE PHILIPPINES, AND SEVERAL MIDDLE EASTERN COUNTRIES SINCE TAKING OFFICE IN JANUARY 1976. HE WILL GO TO EUROPE OFFICIALLY IN JUNE FOR THE COMMONWEALTH

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CONFERENCE AND IT WOULD ROUND OUT PREPARATIONS
FOR ELECTIONS WHICH ARE EXPECTED THIS YEAR OR
NEXT IF HE WERE TO MEET PRESIDENT CARTER.

3. FURTHERMORE, MFA AND DATUK HUSSEIN MAY BE
AWARE THAT SINGAPORE PRIME MINISTER LEE KUAN
YEW IS SEEKING A MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT. THEY
ARE CONSCIOUS OF THE SHARP CONTRAST IN THE
TREATMENT ACCORDED THEM OVER THE YEARS REGARDING
MEETINGS OF THIS KIND AND THE REMARKABLE ACCESS
LEE HAD DURING THE PAST ADMINISTRATION TO BOTH
THE PRESIDENT AND THE SECRETARY OF STATE. GAP
OF SIX YEARS SINCE LATE TUN RAZAK'S 1971 VISIT
TO THE WHITE HOUSE MUST GIVE THEM SOME

FEELINGS OF NEGLECT, PARTICULARLY SINCE THEY KNOW
THAT HUSSEIN'S POLICIES ARE MORE CONGRUENT WITH
OUR OWN THAN RAZAK'S WERE.

4. IT IS APPARENT THAT THE PROPOSED MEETING
BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT AND DATUK HUSSEIN HAS BECOME
A MATTER OF IMPORTANCE TO THE GOM. WE HOPE,
THEREFORE, THAT THE DEPARTMENT AND THE WHITE
HOUSE WILL EXERT ALL EFFORTS TO FIND TIME FOR
THE TWO TO MEET, EITHER IN WASHINGTON, WHICH IS
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PREFERABLE, OR NEW YORK, EVEN IF THIS INVOLVES
ONLY A BRIEF PERSON-TO-PERSON CONTACT.
ALTERNATIVELY, IT IS CONCEIVABLE THAT HUSSEIN
MIGHT CONSIDER RETURNING TO MALAYSIA FROM THE
COMMONWEALTH CONFERENCE VIA WASHINGTON IF TIME
COULD BE FOUND FOR HIM ABOUT JUNE 17-18.
(WE UNDERSTAND HE WILL MAKE AN OFFICIAL VISIT
TO BELGIUM ENROUTE TO THE THE CONFERENCE.)
UNDERHILL

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